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Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 08680 291137Z

12
ACTION NEA-16

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O 291115Z JUN 74
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0000
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA NIACT IMMEDIATE

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CASC, IN
SUBJECT: HARCOS AND FLETCHER

REF: STATE 140941

1. WE ENTIRELY AGREE WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S CONCERN OVER THE HEALTH OF THE PRISONERS AND THE BAD PUBLICITY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA MAY GET IF THE MATTER DRAGS ON MUCH LONGER. THE TROUBLE NOW SEEMS TO BE THAT THE GOI HAS TAKEN UP THE MATTER TOO LATE, RATHER THAN NOT AT ALL. WITH BOTH CENTRAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS INVOLVED AND BOTH THE EXECUTIVE AND JUDICIARY TO BE DEALTH WITH, DELHI'S INTERVENTION SIMPLY WASN'T SOON ENOUGH TO AVERT THE PROBLEMS WHICH THE DEPARTMENT NOTES.

2. THE CHARGE PUT THE MATTER QUITE DIRECTLY TO TEJA THIS MORNING. WE ARE GREATLY CONCERNED OVER THE PRISONERS HEALTH AND WELFARE. WE HAVE BEEN DOING OUR BEST TO AVOID COMMENTS TO THE PRESS WHICH WOULD BE EMBARRASING TO THE GOI BUT OUR LIMIT IS BEING REACHED. WE ARE APPROACHING THE POINT AT WHICH WE WILL HAVE TO EXPRESS OUR VIEWS ON THE UNSATISFACTORY MANNER IN WHICH THE GOI HAS HANDLED THE CASE. THE CHARGE WENT OVER SOME OF INDIA'S OTHER PUBLIC RELATIONS PROBLEMS IN THE US, THE TEST, ECONOMIC ASSITANCE ETC.---AND SAID THAT INDIA DID NOT NEED ANOTHER. HE ALSO ALERTED TEJA TO STILL ONEHSQRE COMING PROBLEM. BOMBAY BLITZ HAS NOW CARRIED A BRIEF STORY ABOUT THE TAX CASE AGAINST
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PAGE 02 NEW DE 08680 291137Z

JAN DROBOT, IDENTIFYING HIM AS A DEFECTOR FROM POLAND, AND THE

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

AMERICAN PRESS MAY NOW PICK UP THIS AS WELL.

3. TEJA, WHO HAD CHECKED WITH THE OME MINISTRY EARLIER IN THE MORNING, REVIEWED WHAT HAD BEEN ACCOMPLISHED. THE INVESTIGATION HAD NOW BEEN COMPLETED, CONSULAR ACCESS HAD BEEN GRANTED, THE TRIAL COULD BE EXPECTED TOSTART SOON. MEDICAL REPORTS INDICATED THAT THE HEALTH OF THE PRISONERS WAS ALL RIGHT. THE GOI, HE SAID, IS CONTINUING TO PRESS HARD TO EXPEDITE THE CASE.

THE CHARGE TOOK NOTE OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS BUT CONCLUDED THAT WASHINGTON WAS FEELING PRESSURE ON THIS MATTER AND THAT WHEN WORD OF CONTINUED THE HUNGER STRIKE LOSS OF WEIGHT AND FORCED FEEDING GOT OUT WE MIGHT HAVE TO BE CANDID ABOUT HOW WE FELT THE CASE HAD BEEN HANDLED. TEJA CAREFULLY NOTED DOWN THE CHARGES REQUEST THAT THIS MESSAGE BE PASSED ON TO THOSE CONCERNED WITH THE CASE.

4. COMMENT: TO SUM UP OUR VIEWS ON THIS MATTER, IT IS OUR IM-PRESSION THAT THE GOI IS FINALLY BEING QUITE COOPERATIVE IN ATTEMPTING TO EXPEDITE THE CASE AND FACILITATE CONSULAR ACCESS --AND THAT THE MESSAGE HAS GOTTEN THROUGH FROM THE CENTER TO THE WEST BENGAL AUTHORITIES. CALCUTTA'S MANY TELEGRAMS OVER THE PAST FEW DAYS, IN PARTICULAR THAT (CALCUTTA'S 1336) CONVEYING A REPORT FROM THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES ON THE PRISONERS HEALTH, ARE EVIDENCE OF SOME PROGRESS.

5. THERE IS ALSO EVIDENCE THAT PROGRESS IS BEING MADE TO SPEED UP MOVEMENT TOWARD A TRIAL. PICKERING TOLD US THIS MORNING THAT BOTH LAWYERS FOR THE PRISONERS NOW SAY THAT THE INITIAL HEARINGS, FIRST SET FOR JULY 18, HAVE NOW BEEN MOVED UP TO JULY 1 AND 2 AND THAT THE LAWYERS ESTIMATE THAT THE CASE MAY COME TO TRIAL IN TWO TO FOUR WEEKS.

6. THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN RESPONSIVE PROGRESS HAD IT HAPPENED MONTHS AGO WHEN WE FIRST STARTED APPEALING TO THE GOI ON THIS CASE. NOW THINGS ARE MOVING BETTER BUT WE SEE NO REASON WHY WE SHOULD TAKE THE HEAT FOR THE GOI IF THE US PRESS TAKES UP THE ISSUE AGAIN.

ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THE US PRESS DOES NOT PUSH US, WE SUGGEST LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 NEW DE 08680 291137Z

THAT DELHI AND CALCUTTA CONTINUE THEIR EFFORTS FOR THE NEXT SEVERAL DAYS AND SEE IF INDICATIONS OF PROGRESS ARE CONFIRMED.

7. FOR CALCUTTA: WHAT PROGRESS DO YOU BELIEVE WILL BE NECESSARY FOR HARCOS AND FLETCHER TO CALL OFF THEIR HUNGER STRIKE?
SCHNEIDER

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